



Testimony of Carol Scully
Director of Advocacy, The Arc of Connecticut, Inc.
LCO No. 273 H.B. 5321 An Act Establishing A State Ombudsman's Office
For Behavioral Healthcare Coverage

February 6, 2023

Members of the Human Services Committee: Co-Chair Representative Gilchrest, Co-Chair Senator Lessor, Vice Chair Senator Herron Gaston, Vice Chair Representative Lucy Datham, Ranking Member Senator Lisa Seminara, Ranking Member Representative Jay Case, Senator Mahar, Representative Butler, Representative Cook, Representative Comey, Representative Exum, Representative Fortier, Representative Hughes, Representative Johnson, Representative Keitt, Representative Leeper, Representative Santiago, Representative Buckbee, Representative Ferraro, Representative Mastrofrancesco, Representative Pizzuto, Representative Polleta

The Arc Connecticut is the oldest and the largest community-based organization advocating for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. We work tirelessly to uphold our vision that every individual and family living with I/DD has access to the information, advocacy, and skills they need to support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

We are a chapter of The Arc of The United States, which has 675 chapters in 49 states and over 5,000 service locations. Nationwide, we have approximately 7,000 board members, 124,000 staff, 46,000 volunteers and collectively we serve more than 1 million people with I/DD and their family members.

In Connecticut, our 14 Arc local chapters deliver over \$100 million in jobs, supports and services to thousands of people in 162 communities. Together Arcs are the largest provider of supports and services for people with I/DD and their families in the state, providing about 96% of the services.

The Arc of Connecticut supports H.B. 5321. Many persons with intellectual developmental disabilities, developmental disabilities, Autism or other disabilities and the elderly have dual diagnosis that include mental behavioral health conditions. Often, these conditions go untreated, under treated or undiagnosed due to their disability diagnosis. The diagnosis of a disability trumps the diagnosis of a mental behavioral health condition currently in healthcare, an Ombudsman will be able to advocate for the behavioral and mental health treatment for these vulnerable persons.

Additionally, Connecticut has a shortage of behavioral healthcare providers. An Ombudsman can help to highlight this shortage and advocate for solutions including telehealth and reciprocity of licensure.

The Arc of Connecticut urges the Committee to pass H.B. 5321 to protect persons with behavioral health concerns.

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